

Archbishop Lori's Homily - Feast of the Presentation; Knights of Columbus Board Meeting

Feast of the Presentation

Knights of Columbus Board Meeting

Naples, Florida

Feb. 2, 2018

As I get older, I find it a bit harder to keep my eyes open during the evening hours. More often than not, after the day's activities have finished, I'll fall asleep reading a book or article, or I'll be too sleepy to write my article for Columbia, or I'll even fall asleep watching a Ken Burns documentary on PBS.

Each night, however, there is a bright spot amid my drowsiness, and it is found in the scene from St. Luke's Gospel just proclaimed. As part of the final prayer of the day in the Liturgy of the Hours, I recite the beautiful canticle that blessed Simeon first uttered when he held the Christ-child in his arms: "Now, Lord," he said, "you may dismiss your servant. For my eyes have seen the salvation you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel."

Each night I am reminded of the beautiful feast we celebrate today, a feast that recreates that moment when, in the arms of Mary, Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, entered the Temple as the true light of the world. Among my last thoughts of the day is Simeon's joy upon seeing the Messiah or the love with which Mary carried Jesus into the Temple, he who is God from God and light from light. What a peaceful way to end the day!

Some forty days after we've celebrated Christmas, in the Feast of the Presentation, the Church invites us all to encounter anew the light of Christ so that we might be bearers of his light, as was Mary, so that Christ's light might shine on us as once it shone on Simeon. If we were in a parish, we might well be in procession carrying

candles into church symbolizing how it was that Christ, the true light entered the Temple. Bereft of temple and sanctuary, we are not, however, bereft of what we need to celebrate this feast with worthiness and joy. For we, no less than those celebrating this feast in Rome or Jerusalem can and should welcome the light of Christ as if for the first time... into our lives, into our Order, and indeed into the Church of which we living stones.

For, dear friends, in God's grace each of us is a temple of the Holy Spirit. At the core of our being is a hidden sanctuary, our conscience, our soul, in need of the enlightenment that only Christ can give. Let us beg Mary our spiritual Mother, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to carry the light of Christ into our inmost heart so that the flame of faith may burn more brightly, the light of truth may glow more insistently, and the light of divine love may banish the darkness of sin, as also the coldness of indifference.

In the prophecy of Malachi, the Lord comes into the temple to refine the sons of Levi by the fire of his love. How our hearts need of be enlightened and purified! For, in the words of the Canticle of Zechariah, we sometimes sit "in darkness and the shadow of death" as we harbor thoughts and attitudes that lead to sin or justify our sinful deeds. When we admit into our heart of hearts the One who is our light and salvation, all that is unworthy of human dignity and faithful discipleship comes to light. To be sure, we may sometimes be dismayed, even shocked at what we find. The Lord also enlightens and purifies us by testing us - by way of temptation and adversity. Yet, if we lower our pride and exercise a modicum of patience, the light of Christ will overcome the darkness of sin and shine in us more brightly; it not only shine in us but also through us, in our words and deeds.

As we today we welcome the light of Christ into our inward sanctuary, so too, in this moment of grace, we welcome light of Christ anew into the sanctuary, the temple, if you will, of our beloved Order. If we were celebrating this feast at the St. John Paul II National Shrine or at the Holy Family Chapel in New Haven - sanctuaries that are our own - we'd see clearly how we are to welcome the light of Christ afresh into our Order. Yet, could it not be said that what we have here is the core, the inmost sanctuary, of the Knights of Columbus? We are here assembled as the Supreme Officers and Board. We are with our closest co-workers, spouses, and family

members. We have pledged to uphold the principles of the Order and have embraced the responsibility to be keepers of that flame first lit by Father McGivney in the year 1882.

As we seek to participate in the Church's mission of evangelization, seek to build the domestic church, encourage priestly vocations, defend life, help brother knights embrace a robust, masculine spirituality - as we engage worldwide in an array of charitable activities - let us welcome anew the light of Christ into the Order's most sacred precincts. Surely the light already shines in this inner sanctum but who of us can say that it shines sufficiently? Can we fail to pray that the luminous love of Christ will shine in us even more brightly as we seek to enliven our brother knights with new energy and zeal for membership, for works of charity, for unity in brotherhood, for love of country? Let us ask Mary, in the power of the Spirit, to carry into our midst in these days of our Board meeting but also in days to come, the light of Christ, so that we may discern well and wisely the decisions that are before us and exercise a type of leadership that purifies, enlightens, and inspires.

Yet, we do not stand alone - we are part of the Church, the new temple, that privileged place of encounter with the Christ. As baptized members of the Church we are called to brighten it with our holiness. As members of the Knights of Columbus family, we united in brightening the Church with the holiness of charity on a massive scale and assist the Church in its world-wide mission of being that lampstand upon which and from which the light of Christ is to shine.

If the light of Christ shines in us and through us, we will, in God's grace, help to make the Church "a light brightly visible" - a light that attracts our contemporaries to truth and love of Jesus, the Sun of Justice, the splendor of the Father, whose brilliance is eternal. So let us hasten to stand with Mary and Joseph before Simeon. Let us hold Jesus in our hearts Simeon held him in his arms. Let us gaze upon Jesus in love as did his Mother Mary and perhaps more important let us allow Jesus to hold us in his gaze so that we may reflect the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. Vivat Jesus!